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In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

This is a continuation of the "recollections of Bass Suttle" in last week's paper.

Mr. Suttle is telling the story:

"Were the winters colder in the 1880's? I'll say they were! I recall, as a boy, watching the beaux and bells ice-skating on Sam Wilsons mill pond just beyond the present City garage in Shelby. The ice was so thick and heavy that sometimes there was skating for two months in the wintertime.

"Among the skaters whom I recall are Robert L. Ryburn, who was an especially good skater; Ed Fulenwider, Betty Winslow, Gus Stephens, Beck Quinn and his brother Bill, Florence Green, Harry Worthing, Minnie Stephens, Will and Ed Jennings, Will Dameron, Chivus Froneberger, Loss and Ab Harrill, Oliver Summers, Maggle Babington and Jake Rudisill. Sometimes the boys built fires on the ice.

"The Charlotte (N. C.) weather bureau records show that on May 22nd, 1883, the temperature was 40.5 degrees. One day in June, 1889, the temperature was 45 degrees. Of course it was colder in Shelby than in Charlotte.

ICE-HOUSES

"There was no commercial ice. It is my impression we did not have that until the 1890s. A few people built ice-houses and gathered ice from ponds and rivers. This ice was packed in saw dust and sometimes kept until well into the Spring. A few doctors permitted the use of ice in the treatment of typhoid fever; but many would not allow it to be used.

Crawford Durham had an ice-house on East Marion street where the Rogers building now stands. Ice was gathered from a pond back of the building. Dr. L. N. Durham, dentist, who lived where Lowery Suttle now lives had an ice-house; Will McArthur had one;

and Davy Cline, who lives at Lawndale, had one.

FIRST WHEAT HARVESTER

"There was much wonderment and speculation when Cleveland county farmers saw the first wheat harvester which was brought to the county by Thomas E. Elliott in 1886. It required four horses abreast to pull the machine.

"One day when I was about 15 years old, I had the thrill of my life. Mr. Elliott let me ride with him on this machine! He rode the outside horse. I sat in the seat and threw the machine in and out of gear! Up to that time the only way wheat was cut in this section was with a heavy hand scythe. That year the rains came, heavily, and all the wheat sprouted.

ARABIAN PONIES

"That pair of handsome white ponies your father (Shelton Jones) used to drive, and which he later sold to Dr. Victor McBrayer, were Arabian stock. They were brought here from the upper part of South Carolina. I do not know where they came from originally. If they were ever a part of any circus, I never heard of it. I do know another pair of Arabian ponies were sold, about the same time, to some one at Waynesville.

"Other recollections include: the upholstery factory operated by Seventh Day Adventists, located where the Lutz Bros. furniture company now stands. This factory was later moved to Toluca. The corn mill on Buffalo Creek, built by Col. Josh Beam (they called it Baum then) more than 100 years ago, which is still in operation.

"I recall being told the story that when Charles Blanton, first Sheriff of Cleveland county, completed his first years tax collections he mounted his trusty horse and rode all the way to Raleigh to turn this money over to the

proper authorities. It could not have amounted to as much as \$1,000.

"Back of where the Shelby hospital now stands, my uncle, Sheriff D. D. Suttle had a fish dam which covered two acres. We caught great big fish there.

JOHN-THE-BARBER

There were three Negroes who were familiar figures on the streets of Shelby during my boyhood. One was Joe Telescope; another was Jack Beam, a hard working Negro who had a cart which he used to deliver heavy parcels; and the third was John Wilson, whom the boys made furious by yelling at him "buginmyear", which simplified means bug-in-my-ear. This word was some kind of terrible insult, and for that reason gave us boys a great deal of pleasure. Very few people knew John's last name was Wilson for everybody called him John-the-barber. In those days there were no white barbers. John, in addition to cutting hair and shaving his white patrons, peddled ice cream on the streets.

SALES DAY AND TRADE ALLEY

"When the county was established more than 100 years ago, the court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions designated a certain day each month as sales day. Later, the first Monday in each month was made official sales day. On this day were held all sales ordered by the Court, including land sales, ex parte proceedings, bankruptcy sales when the Sheriff put his red flag over the bankrupt's property—real and personal — and sold it to the highest bidder; any other property of whatever nature that came under the jurisdiction of the Court; mortgage foreclosures, and sometimes personal property sales.

"On this day the country people

LIFE

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came to town. Some came on business, and some with no business whatever, except to find out what other folks were doing.

"As far back as I can remember, and I am 78, on Sunday afternoons before the first Monday in each month, I saw coming into town from every direction, North, East, South, West, men in wagons, horseback riders, men in buggies, carts, gigs, some of them leading horses, cows, sheep, goats, mules, calves, colts. They brought with them—anything from a yellow dog to an old gun to be traded or sold or swapped on Trade Alley on sales day.

"The chances were 100 to one that the things to be swapped or traded were of inferior value, or of certain quality; and the would-be trader expected to put over some sort of crooked deal in the firm belief that he could out-smart and out-trade the other fellow. In other words, he was out to find a sucker and more often than not he was the sucker, and the other fellow got the best of the bargain. In that event, he just waited till next trade day to find another sucker.

"Some of these would-be traders camped on Ross' Lane, a few miles above Shelby, on Sunday evening. When they left before sun-up next morning the grounds looked like a regiment of soldiers had camped there.

"Coming into Shelby, these men travelled along roads on either side of which were fences made of chestnut rails. There was no stock law until about 1883, and without fences roving cattle would ruin the crops in the field. Unfortunately, land owners could not now build fences of chestnut rails. A blight has destroyed all the magnificent chestnut trees in the county.

CAMPED IN ALLEY

"Those first-Monday traders and swappers who reached Shelby Sunday night usually camped in the alley back of the LaFayette street business section. All along this alley from where it intersects West Graham street to its intersection with West Sumter, wagons were parked, and camp fires lighted up the dark little village that night. Usually there were two or three fellows with fiddles, and maybe that many with banjos, and they formed congenial groups; frequently from somewhere along the line there would come the merry notes of a jews-harp.

"Monday morning by sun-up there were a great many new arrivals, and trading began in earnest. Not infrequently the same article or animal changed hands many, many times during the day in Trade Alley.

"Nearly everybody got drunk. After legal liquor was voted out of the town in 1876 (or was it 1878?), there was plenty of home-distilled stuff, and the majority of traders gave evidence they believed likker was made to drink, and not to keep for possible snake bite.

"When legal liquor was again permissible in Shelby, from 1893 to about 1900, there were three, and sometimes four, bar-rooms in the little village of less than 2,000 people. Then there was more drinking, and towards sun-down on Monday afternoons the traders would usually head for home, many of them drunk, shouting and whipping their horses.

"(Even so, if given a chance a horse will, as a rule, take its drunk master home. Now-a-days, the automobile goes where it is driven, and sometimes it lands on the road-side—or in the ditch—bottom side up, with the driver under it.)"

"Usually on this trade day, patent medicine vendors had platforms on the main streets, where they were selling snake oil, or some other probably worthless concoction. Usually each vendor

had a Negro comedian on the platform with him, who was singing or banjo picking. The vendor himself was doing all sorts of double talk, keeping the crowd laughing, and selling to the more credulous his worthless so-called curealls.

After the first World War this first Monday Trade Alley group ceased its operations to a large extent. And now Trade Alley on first Monday, is just about like it is on any other day. If anyone is interested in this trade-swap-sell day, he will find it in operation at Forest City on the second Monday in each month."

This closes the interview with Mr. Suttle. In reply to a number of questions regarding him, I would say that he has lived in Shelby since he was two years old. A "liberal" in his views, Benjamin Baxter Suttle is a man of vision, and a strong believer that one phase of progress is good roads. As evidence of this he gave a 50-foot roadway through 84 acres of his farm, known as the Joe Wesson farm, he also gave a portion of the highway on Gold street which runs from South Shelby due West. In earlier days, when the Seaboard Airline and Southern railroads were laying their roadbeds, he and his father, D. B. F. Suttle, gave, or sold for a very, very small sum, the right of way through their farms.

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